2001 CROP SUMMARY

Minnesota experienced a winter of highs and lows during 2000-2001. Temperatures in December were well below average, while levels of precipitation varied throughout the state. Temperatures in January became milder, and statewide average temperatures were above normal. Below average temperatures returned again in February along with above average precipitation across the state. In March, many counties reported high snow levels which prevented early fieldwork and caused damage to barn roofs.

April 2001 was the second wettest April in history. By the end of the month, topsoil moisture conditions across the state were rated 67% surplus; subsoil moisture conditions were rated 55% surplus. Fieldwork experienced delays because of the cool weather and wet conditions. Bemidji received a record snowfall for April 23rd of 12 inches; later that week Canby recorded a high temperature of 90 degrees. At month's end, high winds and warm temperatures created conditions suitable for wildfires. There were more than 140 wildfires throughout the state, and in north central Minnesota alone nearly 13,000 acres burned.

The month of May brought several harsh storms to the state. A severe storm on May 1st produced heavy rains and hail in central and southeastern Minnesota; a tornado touched down in Freeborn County. Rain storms passed across the state further delaying full-scale fieldwork. Severe storms on May 9th produced hail and at least a dozen tornados in east central and southeastern Minnesota; substantial damage was reported in Rice, Steele, and Goodhue counties. Despite the rain, above normal temperatures in May allowed fields to dry and planting to progress. By midmonth, fieldwork was progressing rapidly. Within a week's time, corn planted gained 56 percentage points, and other plantings across the state were catching up to the previous 5-year averages. Throughout the month, the majority of pasture and alfalfa conditions were rated good to excellent, having been helped along by the rain which frustrated many farmers. By the end of the month the majority of oat, barley, spring wheat, and corn conditions were also rated good to excellent. The favorable weather did not last however. Temperatures became cooler than normal, and above average rainfall across the state drove topsoil moisture levels up again to 56% surplus late in the month. Planting was brought to a near standstill. On May 22nd, areas in northern Minnesota received snow. The cold temperatures concerned farmers about delayed crop germination and emergence.

Cool, wet weather continued into June, delaying fieldwork. Although warm weather and sunshine finally arrived in the second week of the month, the prolonged wet conditions caused some corn to yellow and some soybeans and spring wheat to emerge poorly. Severe storms swept across the state midmonth with heavy rain, hail, and tornados which damaged crops in several areas. Wet field conditions worsened, and topsoil moisture conditions were rated 64% surplus. Crop progress remained slow due to lack of sunshine and heat. Seed rot, disease, cutworms, and weed control were concerns for many producers. Toward the end of the month the weather improved, but crop growth was still behind the 5-year average.

The month of July brought hot temperatures to the state. Fields were given a chance to dry out, and crop development finally progressed. The hot temperatures persisted without precipitation, leaving topsoil moisture conditions rated 70% very short to short by midmonth. Crops began to show the effects of the lack of rain. In the west central portion of the state, burnt spots were showing on light soils. Corn and soybean stands were reported to be uneven, and in some areas soybeans had not recovered from earlier excess moisture. In many fields, corn leaves were rolling, and small grains were being pushed to early maturity and were turning ripe before the heads had finished filling. Late July brought rain which ended the dry spell, and soil moisture levels improved in many areas around the state except central and east central Minnesota. The heavy rains and strong winds that improved soil moisture led to lodging in many corn and small grain fields.

Above average temperatures continued into mid-August, followed by a nationwide low temperature of 34 degrees in Hibbing on August 13th. Several strong storms hit the northern areas with heavy rain, wind, and hail, causing crop damage and surplus topsoil moisture levels that led to harvest delays. The remainder of the state, however, did not receive adequate rainfall, and topsoil moisture conditions in the lower two-thirds of the state were overwhelmingly rated very short to short. In moisture deprived areas, soybeans were dropping leaves and corn was denting too early. Although rain fell throughout September, the prolonged dry conditions pushed crops into early maturity. Corn ears were not filled to the tips, and stands were uneven.

Soybean harvest was in full swing by October. Crops were still uneven with crop maturity varying within fields and from field to field. Although moisture conditions became adequate across the state, cold temperatures brought a killing frost early in the month. In late October a record-setting blizzard hit the Northwest. Corn harvest was more difficult due to stalk damage from strong winds.